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INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Attorney General
and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism

B.C. MODERNIZES PUBLIC INQUIRY ACT

VICTORIA – British Columbia has today introduced legislation to modernize and clarify the public inquiry process.

Bill 6 replaces the existing Inquiry Act, which is outdated and unclear and does not address a number of matters that arise with respect to public inquiries. The new statute clarifies the powers and functions of inquiries. It ensures they are based on modern standards of administrative justice, consistent with the Administrative Tribunals Act of 2004.

The new act provides for two types of commissions:

- study commissions to research, examine and provide advice on issues of public policy; and
- hearing commissions to investigate and make findings of fact in matters where there is the possibility of a finding of misconduct.

In addition, hearing commissions will have the power to compel evidence and seek court orders to enforce those powers. Participants will be able to represent themselves or be represented by legal counsel. Witnesses will have the same protections as in a court of law.

Under the new act, release of inquiry reports is mandatory. Oral hearings will be open to the public unless a commission determines that protection of a personal or public interest requires otherwise.

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